



Cape Verde revealed to France through the Works of painters and photographers

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The irreverence of Misá, the loud colors of photographer Marzio Marzot, the black and white faced photographed by Jean-Philippe Leroy and the warm palette of Mito Elias constitute the first "hors d'oeuvre" served to those visiting the Hotel de l'Industrie, where a number of the activities included in Cape Verde Week in France are taking place.

This collective exhibition of art by Cape Verdeans or with Cape Verde as a theme, which also includes Works by David Levy *lima*, Fatinha Penros, Benvinda Pereira and Maria Elisa Fernandes, has served not only to show the reality of the archipelago itself, but also to being together those looking to re-discover their Cape Verdeanness in Paris's Place Saint Germain de Prés.



In the exhibition room, located on the ground floor of the Hotel de l'Industrie, artists sit down to chat with Cape Verdean émigrés in France and explain their art and their country to the curious Parisians and other French who feel attracted by the paintings and photos of a country "so poor, but with so much wealth," as Marzio Marzot encapsulates. This Italian national, married to Italo-Cape Verdean journalist Maria de Lourdes Jesus, explains that he is "at the service of Cape Verde," which he considers his second home. "I don't want to take photos from a poetic point of view, but rather show the reality of this country I love so much." "The theme of Cape Verde Week is islands of contrast, and indeed we can see that Cape Verde, despite its small size and poverty, is immensely rich, especially in its people."



Marzot visited the archipelago for the first time in 1984 and began photographing the daily life of the local people, inundating it with bold colors, in 1987. "I knew a lot of Cape Verdeans in Italy who were embarrassed by the fact that their country was poor, and so I decided to make a book showing how rich the country is and how many beautiful things it has."

Over the past several days in Paris, he has conversed with a number of Cape Verdeans wishing to know the names of the people they see in his pictures. "Many of them tell me, 'I know this person, he lived next door.' It's very interesting to see them recognizing their own country," he says.

Jean-Philippe Leroy is another foreigner enchanted with Cape Verdeans' photogenic and friendly qualities. His exhibition, which contains exclusively black and white photos, emerged from a trip to three of the archipelago's islands, and can be seen at Place Saint Germain de Prés. "I'm the only foreigner showing his vision of Cape Verde here, since Marzio is very closely connected to the country, and this is a privilege." He says. Leroy became enchanted with Cape Verde and feels that his participation in the collective exhibition is a way of "paying for" all of the friendliness of which he was the object in Cape Verde. "People give everything they have if need be, and my images are a way of paying this back," he explains. This young French citizen has also created an association, Regarde Ailleurs, to help poor Cape Verdean

children. More information can be found at <http://jipp.free.fr>.

For Mito Elias, who is also displaying his paintings in Paris, Cape Verde Week in France is “a very interesting pole of contact, even with the rain, which has been the only negative aspect.” “We’re hoping to make more contacts and to see a greater number of visitors, but just being in Paris and participating in an exhibition here is already a dream fulfilled.” His exhibition includes “lapido na bó,” a painting he elaborated at the request of the late Orlando Pantera to illustrate the cover of his first album, which was never released due to the musician and composer’s premature death in 2001.



Cesária Évora gives private concert today

Like Mito, Misá is delighted with the opportunity to display her work in Paris. “It’s enchanting being in Paris, such a welcoming multicultural city.” The artist, who has gained notoriety for her work with the Rabelados religious community on the island of Santiago, says that the Cape Verdeans who have visited the exhibition “are very happy with the initiative.” “You see a lot of families with their children, many of whom don’t even speak Crioulo, showing what Cape Verde is, and explaining what the country has through conferences, paintings and cuisine.” Misá has felt “admiration” from the French due to the fact that Cape Verde has female painters. “They’re enchanted at seeing femininity in the paintings.”

Bela Duarte and Domingos Luísa are also expected to join the collective exhibition, but their works remain stuck at customs in Paris.

The rain has been a conditioning factor of the popularity of Cape Verde Week in France, as have a number of other parallel activities such as the Roland Garros Grand Slam, the Cannes Film Festival and the Mônaco Formula 1 Grand Prix.

Even so, Cesária Évora is expected to attract a crowd to a private concert tonight at 9:00 pm at the reception hall at the Mairie of the 6th arrondissement.

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